



Mansfield Tomorrow

OUR PLAN ► OUR FUTURE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP

Wednesday, May 1, 2013 | 5:30 pm to 7:30 pmpm

Buchanan Auditorium, Mansfield Library

Minutes

Present- Dirk Fecho, George Thompson, John McGuire, Pat Bresnahan, Ronald Beebe, Steven Ferrigno, Danny Briere, Michael Zito, Mehdi Anwar, Kia Martinson, Robert Moskowitz, Steven Stein, Neil Warren, Tom Burgess, Rita Zangari, Cynthia van Zelm, Howard Kaufman, Scott Lehman Staff: Matt Hart, Linda Painter, Jennifer Kaufman. Consultants: Peter Kwass, Mt. Auburn Associates; Larissa Brown; Goody Clancy

The meeting was called to order by Linda Painter, Director of Planning and Development.

- I. Introductions-** Members of the Focus Group Introduced themselves
- II. Review of Mansfield Tomorrow project and the purpose of the economic development strategy report-** Larissa Brown gave an overview of the Mansfield Tomorrow Project and how the economic development strategy fits into the overall plan.
- III. Review and discussion of existing economic conditions and trends-** Peter Kwass gave a presentation on the town's current economic profile, including major industries, employment and wages. Areas of opportunity were identified based on comparison of local industry growth compared to the Windham-Tolland Region.
- IV. Review and discussion of economic development issues and potential goals -** Peter reviewed various issues and opportunities, including the town's relatively low share of retail employment as compared to food services, health care and other employment. He also discussed the University Technology Park and potential for technology based economic development. Also identified were challenges such as the high percentage of state properties/heavy reliance on state aid and below average commercial/industrial tax base compared to similarly-sized communities.

Committee discussion centered on the impact of the university on economic development, such as a stagnant population growth other than what is related to the university and a desire for more information as to how Mansfield compares to other university communities. Members expressed an interest in examples of other similarly situated communities to see what has been successful there, particularly related to technology spin-offs. There was also interest in having a better understanding of how our businesses are doing and what the Town could do to meet their needs. Interest in a regional approach to economic development was also expressed.

The presentation also identified some preliminary goals for committee discussion such as increasing the grand list of commercial/industrial property; diversifying the economy; increasing job opportunities; considering public-private partnerships to facilitate redevelopment of the Depot Campus and Bergin Correctional Facility; developing necessary infrastructure to support retail and consumer services, and streamlining development and business regulations.

Due to the time, the Committee had limited discussion on the draft strategies. Bresnahan noted the need to focus on sustainable growth, including consideration of water and other environmental resources, and identified the desire to establish an optimal growth target. It was suggested that a starting point for that discussion could be information on what the grand list would need to be to cover services for the existing population. Suggestions were also made regarding addition of strategies on regionalism and business retention efforts.

V. Public Comment- No public comment.

VI. Next steps and Adjourn- Staff will be in touch regarding the next meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:40 pm.